

Why no plans for wind farms in Utah?

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I was pleased to read that Utahns are buying more wind power through Utah Power's "Blue Sky" program and that Utah Power plans to build an additional 1,400 megawatts of renewable energy capacity, mostly wind, in the next 10 years (Aug. 22 news article, "Energy alternatives, technology offer blackout solutions").

However, I'm wondering why there are no plans underway to build those wind farms in Utah. Are the associated opportunity costs really that much lower in Wyoming and Oregon, the two states that will ultimately be receiving some of our Blue Sky dollars?

Encouraging wind farms in Utah would help keep Utah's energy dollars in the state. This could possibly shift desperately needed jobs and economic opportunities to rural communities and be visible symbols to the state's residents of the potential of renewable energy.

It may, in fact, be in Utah's best long-term interests to promote the establishment of wind farms within the state through subsidization, in a spirit similar to the subsidization that has historically benefited the mining industry. Wind is a clean alternative to coal-fired power generation whose time seems to be coming.

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